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Wega Mini Nova Inox - user guide and hints

Possibly the last coffee machine you will ever need - a hx classic

- Sturdy 2 litre steel boiler with heat exchanger for correct coffee temp
- Hot water outlet, steam arm and boiler pressure guage
- Polished steel exterior and 1 litre removable cold water tank
- 1 single and 1 double commercial group handle and E61 brew group



Tempting picture isn't it, a freshly brewed single shot of 1floz espresso, the thick crema still settling. Achieving coffee bar quality has never been easier, the Mini Nova delivers commercial size features in a compact footprint. This is part review and part user guide, as currently Wega's own manual for this excellent little machine is

sadly lacking. How to get this guide spot on? The answer to me was simple - take one home and live with it just like anyone else would! Surprisingly the mini nova inox has exceeded my own high expectations, and is well on the way to homing my own skills with the last hurdle I have struggled with - latte art. Starting with the basic machine, the automatic hand filled vibrating pump version is pictured right.

1) Removable cold water tank featured on the hand filled models.

The top tray can be used for storing cups and will warm them.

2) Steam arm, movable on a ball socket.

3) Hot water spout - directional

4) Group handle single&double

5) Removable drip tray

6) Main controls - see later

In fact there are four models in the range to choose from.

Semi-automatic feature a rocker switch to start and stop coffee brewing and this is the type used for this review, automatic as

pictured above right has a keypad with programmable doses for a single shot and double shot - so you can press the button and leave the machine to fill your cup to the desired level you have set. Programming the automatic is relatively easy, press and hold the PROG button and press the button you



wish to set (pre prepare the desired dose group handle and have a cup ready underneath) release all buttons as coffee starts to brew. When your desired dose level is reached in the cup press the dose button you are setting again. Brewing will stop and an audible single will be heard.



The main controls are seen above from the semi-automatic version.

a) Hot water switch - hot water is lively when dispensed and can spit a bit but is quick enough to ensure most users can get rid of their kettle (although you would need to have your machine on most of the time)

b) Brew button. Confusingly this is not put over the brew group, and for some reason Wega choose not to fit the natty buttons I know they have with a little coffee cup logo on. Retro fitting the logo button has been done by Pennine but time demands mean it is not always possible.

c) Power on button (it illuminates when on) - over the brew group and I still knock it off when meaning to stop brewing.

d) Boiler pressure gauge. Starts at 0 (seven o'clock if a clock face), for seven minutes after turn on you will just hear the boiler heat. Around seven minutes you should hear a hiss (anti-vac valve locking up) and then the pressure gauge will start to rise. Ten minutes in and you should be at full pressure (1.2 bar in the green section) around midnight on a clock face. You are now ready to brew/steam.

e) Steam tap. Clockwise opens, counter clock wise closes.

So with the machine on a suitable counter you are ready to get started. The machine will have been bench tested (if from ourselves) so you should not



need to rinse the water tank - but if you wish to it pulls out upwards (with a bit of effort). Otherwise just fill it up - note there is a white float near the base of the tank - this detects low water level and will stop the machine brewing/shut down elements if the water in the tank is too low. Top up to resolve this - but you may need to turn the machine off and then on to resolve the issue. Lock in the single spout group handle and turn on. You should lock a group handle in so as the machine warms up the handle warms as well - once operating

temperature is reached run some water through the group handle to warm it up (the handle should be hot to touch) - run the water into a cup you will be using to warm that as well. At this point is worth noting that with equipment of this type temperature is critical to your espresso - cold group handles will result in a poor extraction and cold drink - always warm the handles if you switch between single and double, and leave them in the brew group between drinks to make sure they stay warm. Also your cups should be warmed - especially espresso cups, to ensure you do not get a cold drink.

At this point we are ready for making coffee. Your coffee needs to be freshly roasted and finely ground - there is little point investing in this type of equipment and then using pre-ground coffee through it unless you can get a good source of espresso fine ground coffee fresh. Most pre-packed off the shelf coffee's are in an omni grind - and this is far too coarse for a good espresso. Ideally you need to invest in a grinder, and really any grinder under around £60 will not be able to grind the coffee fine enough for espresso. I have been using an Iberital mc2 doserless grinder - it has a button which when you push the portafilt against it sets off a timed grind so seven grams (adjustable) of coffee is ground into your portafilt fresh. This is a great high end home grinder although there are many others in a similar price bracket such as the Innova I1. The important aspect you need is that the grinders have burrs - conical or flat - to grind the coffee finely - blade grinders which are found at the lower price bracket will not grind fine enough for espresso. Pictured left the Iberital is grinding a timed dose straight into the portafilt. The grind can be adjusted for different bean types and your own requirements to - finer the grind the slower the extraction into the cup and thicker the crema - but too fine will overextract or not run into the cup at



all!

Having ground your required dose into the portafilt, it is essential that the ground coffee is tamped.

Tamping compresses the ground coffee to give a flat surface for the water to run through and provide an even extraction. Poor tamping can cause channeling - where the water blasts its way past the coffee without actually going through it.

Machines are normally provided with a plastic tamper, but you really need an aluminum tamper to finish your set up off. Pictured right is a basic aluminium tamper, although the range of tampers is wide including very high quality wood types from Reg Barber for example. Once you have the coffee tamped (best method is to level the ground coffee in the handle with a tap to the side of it, tamp once, knock the side of the tamper on the side of the handle to displace any

grounds on the side of the filter basket and tamp again. Pressure for tamping should be around 30lb per square inch - difficult to judge but you should provide strong even pressure to the coffee. If the ground coffee is pitted and wet when you remove the group handle after brewing then you should tamp harder and possibly brew with a little more ground coffee.



Left is a single 7g shot of ground coffee in the single spout group handle. When tamped you can see there is a nice flat surface for the water to run through.



The resulting extraction should produce a rich, thick dark cream (but with no black marks or bubbles). The cup should be filled to a third full with coffee.

For foaming milk choose a 0.6litre steel frothing jug for best performance - this size is ideal for the Mini Novas steam arm



length. Fill the frothing jug to at least quarter full - it will be too much for one drink but if you try to froth with too little milk it will get too hot too quickly. Purge the steam arm (open it and let it run until dry steam is emitted). Then position the tip of the steam arm just below the surface of the milk, open it fully and try to create a swirling vortex in the centre of the milk jug - as the foam rises up the jug

lower the jug to keep the steam tip near the surface. Ideally you want small tight air bubbles not big ones - so keep the steam tip below the surface.

When you can no longer hold the side of the jug the milk should be hot enough - do not boil the milk. Pour the milk and foam into the centre of the



cup to produce a nice crema ring around the rim of the cup - with skill and when you get the foam spot on you can start to produce latte art like a rosetta. The steam arm should be wiped with a damp cloth every time after use to keep it clean.

The Wega Mini Nova Inox is available in semi-automatic or automatic versions, and as a hand filled unit with vibrating pump (16 bar pump regulated to 9 bar) or plumbed in with a commercial rotating pump set at 9 bar pressure.

The hand filled vibrating pump versions have always suffered from rapidly filling drip trays - this is mainly due to the excess pressure which is released by the regulating valve to keep the pump at 9 bar being fed into the drip tray. Other manufacturers route this excess back into the water tank but the pull release tank on the mini nova does not make this easy. At Pennine we have a workaround for this system which feeds the excess pressure back into the water tank - this is currently running on the machine I have been using and it has produced no problems with brewing - the only differences are less drip tray emptying and less tank filling. Currently we are awaiting confirmation that this is OK from Wega (and also why they didn't think of it) but currently it seems likely this modification will be made to every vibe pump mini nova we sell.

It's been a year now since the first section of this guide was written, so I expect you are dying to find out how the Mini Nova has held up. Well, the coffee keeps getting better, a combination of fresh roasted batches using a gene cafe and I-Roast, alongside our weekly traditionally roasted commercial blends using quality origin coffee from estates with repeatable and

consistant taste.



The Iberital MC2 grinder is still in place, despite having the choice of a range of commercial espresso grinders, the Iberital timed grind version gives consistant ground coffee fine enough for espresso, the and worm grind adjustment allows the finest of adjustment to get that espresso extraction perfect. Milk foaming is improving, the Mini Nova provides buckets of steam although it does foam slower then it's commercial counterparts. Getting the milk right is the easy part however, it's pouring the milk into the cup that seems to be an illusive trick, and it all happens so fast that panic sets in which always seems to end up with a botched rosetta. It's practice that seems to be key, and repeated day in and day out milk foaming and pouring.



Thats as far as I have got, the extreme Barista latte flame.

The triple shot baseless portafilt is a great addition to the machine, with a clear view of the filter basket you can tell straight away when your tamp is uneven.



The other thing about the baseless portafilts is you get to admire the rich colours in your crema (see above), it's a delight to watch the extraction develop and pour.



The massive crema you can see settling in the picture above is in part due to the fact the coffee used for that picture was only roasted the day before. Fresh roasted coffee produces huge amounts of thick crema, but because it is still de-gassing from the roasting process the crema quickly bubbles off and disappears. After roasting coffee needs to be rested between two and five days depending on the origin beans and degree of roast - finding the exact period where the coffee is at it's finest is part of the fun of roasting.

The blend used for the pictures above incorporated Brazillian, Colombian, Honduras and Peruvian origin greens. Roasted on a Gene Cafe set at 242 degrees celcius for 17 minutes - the beans were roasted just into second crack - dark but stopped just before the oils start to emerge.

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